

Israel

FBIS 103 (SEE 86)

PERES: VIETNAM SHOWS ISRAEL RIGHT TO REJECT EGYPT

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(TEXT) TEL AVIV, APRIL 12, REUTER--ISRAELI DEFENSE MINISTER SHIMON PERES SAID TODAY THE COLLAPSE OF AMERICAN GUARANTEES TO SOUTH VIETNAM PROVED ISRAEL WAS RIGHT TO MAKE NO FURTHER CONCESSIONS TO EGYPT DURING THE ABORTIVE KISSINGER PEACE MISSION.

IN AN EVIDENT REFERENCE TO REPORTED SECRET U.S. PROMISES OF AID TO THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT, THE DEFENSE MINISTER SAID IN A RADIO INTERVIEW, "IN A WORLD GOING UP IN FLAMES, WITH GUARANTEES TOPPLING LIKE SO MANY STACKS OF CARDS...I AM CONVINCED THAT OUR DECISION WAS THE RIGHT ONE."

MR. PERES TOLD HIS INTERVIEWER ON THE ARMED FORCES RADIO THAT THIS WAS A TIME OF CRISIS IN ISRAELI-AMERICAN RELATIONS.

"THERE IS NO POINT IN DENYING THIS. IN SPITE OF THIS, I AM CONVINCED THIS IS A PASSING CRISIS," HE SAID.

ALTHOUGH SMALL NATIONS WERE SUBJECT TO PRESSURES FROM BIG POWERS, THE VALIDITY OF AGREEMENTS MADE BY THESE BIG POWERS WAS LIMITED, HE SAID. THE VIET CONG HAD VIOLATED AN AGREEMENT SIGNED LESS THAN TWO YEARS AGO WITH THE UNITED STATES.

HE FEARED THAT IF ISRAEL HAD GIVEN IN TO EGYPTIAN TERMS FOR MAJOR WITHDRAWALS IN SINAI, EGYPT WOULD THEN HAVE PRESSED FOR A FURTHER PULLBACK AND "WE WOULD HAVE FOUND OURSELVES IN A HEADLONG GALLOP."

HE SAID HE VIEWED THE DRYING-UP OF AMERICAN MILITARY AID TO ISRAEL AS ONLY A REMOTE POSSIBILITY. AMERICAN LEADERS HAD STATED THEIR COMMITMENT TO ISRAEL'S SECURITY.

THE REAL QUESTION WAS WHETHER AMERICA WANTED TO TURN ITS BACK ON THE WORLD--AND THAT WAS A POSSIBILITY. BUT IF IT DID SO, THE SOVIET UNION WOULD FILL THE GAP, MR PERES WARNED.

"I WOULD FIND IT VERY HARD TO BELIEVE THAT AMERICA HAS GIVEN A DIVORCE TO THE WHOLE WORLD TO CONCENTRATE ONLY ON ITS OWN AFFAIRS," HE SAID.

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